

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000433

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AID/ANE
STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, EAP DAS DALEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2013

TAGS: [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: NEW FUNDING INITIATIVE: WHY NOT KEEP AN OPEN MIND?

REF: A. STATE 81067

[B](#). TOKYO 1194

Classified By: COM CARMEN MARTINEZ FOR REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph seven.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: The language of the recent FY 2003-04 omnibus spending measure's managers' report (asking us to work with the NLD on a "new initiative" to outline a comprehensive needs assessment) seems at odds with subsequent guidance (Ref A) limiting this assessment only to democracy-related programming. We ask that the Department revisit this issue with the Hill to see if there is support for a slightly less restrictive approach that would still address the primary concern that USG assistance does not in any way benefit the SPDC regime. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) We appreciate Ref A's elaboration on the language in the FY 2003-04 omnibus spending measure's managers' report regarding working with the NLD to identify and address the "urgent needs" of the Burmese people. We were surprised, though, by the expectation that traditional limitations on general ESF funding would apply to this "new initiative." The managers' report discusses other earmark-funded programs, namely for fighting HIV/AIDS, that are not limited to democracy promotion. We welcomed what we thought was indeed a "new initiative" along these lines; to look -- as always in tandem with the NLD and its leadership -- with an unbiased, unjaded eye at what the most pressing priorities are. Consulting with the NLD on the best way for the USG to promote democracy in Burma does not constitute a "new initiative." This has been the backbone of our work here for many years.

[1](#)4. (C) The managers' report asks us to use the "expertise of the leadership" of the NLD to determine and address the "urgent needs of the people of Burma." Nowhere does it imply that the intent of the managers was to limit these findings to new democracy programming. Indeed, from elsewhere in the managers' report (such as the section requesting a report from U.S. AID on the conditions of Burmese refugees and displaced persons) it is evident that Congress this year is interested in exploring the "root causes" of the crises facing the people of Burma. This is a laudable objective. Though lack of freedom and deplorable human rights are a fundamental reason for the suffering of all Burmese people (displaced or not), the more immediate causes of the humanitarian crisis facing the Burmese people are horrendous health, sanitation, and educational deficiencies. These are the issues that other bilateral donors are now addressing, in some cases quite independently of the SPDC.

[1](#)5. (C) Limiting before the fact any discussion to democracy promotion programs seems to go against the managers' intent. It also ignores the NLD leadership's previously expressed ideas that "urgent needs of the people of Burma" go well beyond such programs. The NLD leadership has welcomed U.S. support for HIV/AIDS, childhood development programs, environmental conservation, and protection of workers rights inside the country. While none of these fits directly within the limited definition of democracy and governance programs, there's no question that all would reside on the list sought by Congress of "urgent needs."

[1](#)6. (C) A third argument for allowing more slack in the reins is that by giving the NLD and its leadership more flexibility to guide USG assistance efforts, the party will gain status and credibility with the SPDC, hopefully convincing it of the NLD's important and indispensable role in the future of the country. As reported in Ref B, at the most recent ICG meeting in Tokyo, U.N. Special Envoy Razali urged donors to work closely with the NLD while developing aid programs specifically as a way to build up ASSK and the NLD and perhaps get the dialogue jump started. From the local angle, U.S. assistance to NLD-promoted humanitarian projects will help cement the role of the NLD as a party truly interested in and dedicated to the "needs of the people."

[1](#)7. (C) Action request: We urge the Department to return to the Hill to revisit this matter with all/all authors of the report language, to decide whether it's truly in USG interests to put the democracy promotion limitation on the

consultative process before we've heard what the NLD has to say. We propose instead to approach the NLD and its leadership with the broader aim of identifying programs that address the urgent needs of the people (as requested by the report language) and also scrupulously avoid "providing direct support to the SPDC" and its affiliated organizations.

Martinez